



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System



Tips for the Conway School Garden Champions

School Garden activities for October

Now is a great time to start planting fall and winter color. If you haven't visited your local nursery or garden center recently, you are in for a treat. From pansies and mums to snapdragons, flowering kale and edible kale, purple mustard, Swiss chard, asters, goldenrod and much, much more awaits. Make sure you do water when planting.

Spring blooming bulbs can also start going in the ground mid-month through the end of the year. I like to wait for cooler weather before I begin to plant. Daffodils, crocus and hyacinths will come back year-after-year, but for most varieties of tulips, it is best to treat them as annuals and plant new bulbs each season. You can plant the bulbs underground with pansies and winter annuals above.

Fall vegetable gardens are still growing strong if you kept up with their care. Many gardeners are seeing a resurgence of tomatoes and peppers, while okra and eggplant are also doing well. There is still time to plant transplants of broccoli, cabbage, Swiss chard and kale. Most of these plants can grow year-round now with just minimal protection if temperatures get below 28 degrees. If you are done gardening for the season, consider planting a cover crop or mulching your garden spot to prevent weeds from growing all winter.

October is the month when we move our houseplants and any tropical plants into a protected spot, if you are bringing them indoors. Try to move them when inside conditions mimic outside temperatures. If you wait for too many cool nights, the plants will have a much harder transition moving inside. Usually by mid-October they should be making the move. If you are just putting them into a garage or winter storage area, then you can wait a bit longer.

Many perennials started their decline early this year. If the plants are looking bad, don't wait for a frost to cut them back, do it now. If your spring or summer blooming perennials need to be divided, now is a great time to do so. By doing the work in the fall, we allow the roots to get established while the tops are dormant. They will be well-established and ready to take off next growing season. Now is also a great time to plant wildflower seeds and many perennials including poppies, purple coneflowers, columbine, foxglove and the annual larkspur, Texas bluebonnets, bachelor's buttons and cornflowers.

Practice good sanitation in the garden. We had a lot of diseases this season and weeds were at an all-time high. As plants begin to play out, pull them up and get them out of the garden. If they were diseased, discard them, if not, add them to the compost pile. Weeds are continuing

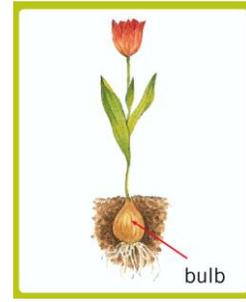
to grow and if you allow them to bloom and set seeds, you will have more next season. Summer weeds are nearing the end of their season, while winter weeds are beginning to grow. That is one thing we are almost never without in a garden—weeds! Use a good hoe, or hand pull, mow and mulch.

Pumpkins are everywhere now, along with gourds. It is an easy way to add instant color to a landscape, and with good choices, they can last for months. Choose a pumpkin that is blemish free and that has a short stem on it.

Fall Bulbs - <https://www.uaex.edu/publications/PDF/FSA-2096.pdf>

Learning about bulbs using paperwhite narcissus

Bulbs are plants growing from an underground mass of food storage tissues. The storage capacity of a bulb is a special adaptation for survival. Paperwhites do not require a chilling period so can be planted right out of the package from the store and planted indoors.



Lesson Plan on bulbs: <https://kidsgardening.org/lesson-plans-bulb-botany/>

Video on bulbs: <https://vimeo.com/147187220>

Leaves are going to be falling soon so they need to be composted

Composting Resources: <https://www.uaex.edu/yard-garden/vegetables/compost.aspx>

Fun video from Arkansas on composting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pxaasqv3Ec>

Composting is controlling the natural decay of organic matter by providing the right conditions for composting critters to convert yard trimmings into a product that can be returned to your landscape and garden. Tiny organisms (mainly bacteria, fungi and protozoa) break down garden and landscape trimmings in a moist, aerobic (oxygen-demanding) environment. The final product is a dark, crumbly form of decomposed organic matter.

Compost improves your soil. When added to soil, compost breaks up heavy clay soils, helps sandy soils retain water and nutrients, and releases essential nutrients. Compost also contains beneficial microscopic organisms that build up the soil and make nutrients available to plants. Improving your soil is the first step towards growing healthy plants.

Worm Composting



Worm composting or vermicomposting is a great way to compost food scraps. It is suitable for apartment dwellers, homeowners and a great classroom activity.

Worm bins can be made from plastic tubs by drilling air holes in the tub. Plastic tub bins tend to get wetter than wooden bins. If the bin is too wet, odor problems occur and worms die or leave the bin. Holes can be drilled in the bottom of the tub. Set the bin on wooden blocks or attach legs to the tub to increase circulation. Worm bins can also be built from

plywood; see the Cooperative Extension Service fact sheet for building plans.

Worm Composting Bins - <https://www.uaex.edu/publications/PDF/FSA-6032>

<https://www.epa.gov/recycle/how-create-and-maintain-indoor-worm-composting-bin>

<http://compost.css.cornell.edu/worms/basics.html>

Keep the Garden Green in the Winter with a Cover Crop

When seeded in the fall and grown throughout the winter, crops such as grains, grasses or legumes can help ensure healthy, productive soil for the next growing season.

Cover crops are not grown for harvest, but rather to protect and improve soils. They are commonly referred to as 'green manure' because at the end of their growing cycle, cover crops should be terminated and tilled back into the soil, where nutrients are released as the plants decay.



A fall cover crop helps protect against water and wind erosion over the winter, Francis said. During periods of rainfall, the broad leaves of some cover crops intercept raindrops, lessening their impact on soil particles and reducing nutrient runoff. Additionally, the root systems of cover crops help stabilize surface soil during heavy winds.

Cover crops tend to scavenge or trap any nutrients left in the soil that could otherwise be leached out into drainage water. Not only does this ensure nutrient availability for crops, but it also protects local water quality by preventing nutrients from entering the groundwater.

When tilled into the garden soil and left to decompose, cover crops produce compounds that cement soil components together into aggregates, clumps of soil particles held together by organic matter. This results in improved soil structure and the ability for the soil to eventually produce crops.

Cover crops also contribute to soil fertility and potential for crop production by building up nitrogen in the soil. Legumes, when used as cover crops, acquire and fix atmospheric nitrogen for their own growth. Once the plants die, the legume residue breaks down and releases much of the nitrogen into the soil for later use by spring crops.

Planting cover crops is also a good form of weed control. Cover crops rapidly establish themselves when planted and smother existing weeds. When terminated in the spring, cover crops leave behind residue that acts as a physical barrier that helps suppress weed seed germination. Some cover crops also prevent weeds by competing with them for light, moisture, nutrients and space.

Cover crops can be planted as a single species or in mixtures. However, before farmers choose which cover crops to plant, they should first consider their overall goal.

Different cover crops serve different purposes and producers should consider their main objective. Some crops can be planted to add nitrogen or organic matter to the soil, while others are better at reducing erosion. While all cover crops provide many benefits, some species or mixtures of species are better suited depending on the objective.

To prevent soil erosion, plant cereal or winter rye, oats or cowpeas. Cereal rye and winter wheat are good cover crops for adding organic matter to the soil. Legumes such as Austrian winter peas, crimson clover and hairy vetch are good providers of nitrogen.

Because of their ability to cover the soil quickly, buckwheat, oats and cereal rye are good cover crops to use for suppressing weeds. Brassica plants such as mustard are known for their pest control properties, as they release chemical compounds that may be toxic to soil-borne pathogens and pests such as nematodes and fungi.

The most common cover crop mixtures of cover crops include a legume plus a grass or cereal grain, which will provide physical support for the climbing legume.

Farmers can plant cover crops immediately after harvesting the primary crops from their garden. Planting should be done early enough to allow four weeks of growth before the cold weather sets in. Tilling the garden before planting cover crops can help ensure the preparation of a seedbed and aid in weed and insect control.

Plant large seeded cover crops such as peas, hairy vetch, wheat and oats at a depth of 1 to 1.5 inches in closely spaced furrows. Small seeded cover crops such as rye grass and buckwheat can be broadcast and covered with a light raking, placing the seeds at a depth of about 0.25 inches. Dry soil should be irrigated often enough to provide the moisture needed for germination to occur.

Cover crops need to be terminated in order for spring and summer crops to reap the benefits of the healthy soil they leave behind. Some cover crops such as oats and oilseed radish are terminated naturally by cold weather. Other varieties should be killed through tillage, mowing or herbicide applications. For guidelines on herbicide applications, farmers should contact their county Extension agent.

When managed correctly, cover crops can help protect Arkansas gardens from the elements during the winter and replenish the soil's nutrients for a productive spring.

Understanding Cover Crops - <https://www.uaex.edu/publications/pdf/FSA-2156.pdf>

Year Round Home Garden Planting Chart

<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>
Cover Crops	Conduct Soil Test
Lettuce (45-65)	Strawberries (1-5 years)
Shallots (90-120)	Garlic (210-240)
Leeks (70-130)	Collards (50-75)
Garlic (210-240)	Turnips (40-55)
Collards (50-75)	Lime Soil
Mustard (40-50)	Salad Greens (Protected)
Kohlrabi (50)	Order Catalogs
Turnips (40-55)	Cover Crops
Spinach (42)	Apply and Incorporate Compost
Strawberries (1-5 years)	
() = Days from planting to harvest	

Happy Fall Gardening!

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Fall Plant Trial Demonstration located at
Master Gardener Teaching Garden,
Freyaldenhoven's Greenhouse,
Siebenmorgan Road, Conway

Side by side demonstration of several
Pansies, Violas and Ornamental
Cabbages

